INTRODUCTION

All Praise is due to Allah, and blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah, his progeny, companions and whoever follows his path till the Day of Resurrection.

One of the major issues in Islam which many Muslims have a lot of arguments about is the issue of "*Hijab*". These arguments occur because of two reasons, namely: 1) lack of complete understanding of this issue and 2) lack of knowledge or ignorance of the proofs of the obligation of "*Hijab*" in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. In this booklet, I tried, with the help of Allah, to put together all these arguments among Muslims on the issue of "*Hijab*" in focus. First, I gave the lexical definition of the word "*Hijab*", as well as its contextual meaning in different contexts;then I cited some *Ayaat* (Verses) from the Qur'an to show how Allah ﷻ the Almighty uses the

word and thus makes its meaning more accessible to the understanding of all Muslims. Second, I quoted the proofs of the obligation of “*Hijab*” in the Qur’an and the Sunnah *(using the translation of the meaning of the Noble Qur’an by Dr. Al-Hilali and Dr. Khan)*. Third, I listed the allegations of those who claim the legality of exposing a woman’s face and then, I stated the corresponding explicit answers based on the Qur’an and the authentic Sunnah to refute their claims. With this presentation, I hope that Muslims all over the world will come to agreement and unity instead of argument and/or misunderstanding if not falling into disputes. After all, Islam is a divine message that calls the entire mankind to the worship of One God, Allah ﷻ the Almighty. Such worship, which includes obedience to Allah’s Law (like the obligation to wear “*Hijab*” by women) must be based on the Qur’an and the authentic Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad

ﷺ. Let us always be guided by the following Qur'anic verses to obey Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, Allah says, which meaning can be translated as:

"It is not for a believer, man or woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decreed a matter that they should have any option in their decision. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger he has indeed strayed into a plain error." (33:36)

"O you who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger (Muhammad ﷺ) and render not vain your deeds." (47:33)

Definition of Hijab

It must be obvious that every Muslim should understand his/her faith in the correct way; that is, to have authentic knowledge of Islam based on the Qur’an and the Sunnah so that we can follow what Allah سبحانه وتعالى and His Messenger ﷺ have commanded us to do and refrain ourselves from committing sins because of disobedience. The best way to learn and practice Islam correctly is by knowing and understanding at least the correct meaning of the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in their original language, Arabic, if not learning the language itself when possible. We have to understand that no matter how much efforts were put to translate the meanings of the

Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ or the right explanations by the renowned Muslim scholars of these two revealed sources of knowledge and guidance into other languages, there will always be loss of meaning due to linguistic and cultural differences and contrasts between the two languages. It is in this context that I tried to give meaning of the word "*Hijab*" in Arabic in as much explicit words as possible. If we look up meaning of the word "*Hijab*" in a bilingual dictionary, we learn that it means "veil", "screen", "cover(ing)" or "curtain" (see Al Mawrid: A Modern Arabic English Dictionary, 1992 p. 453).

It is obvious that the term "*Hijab*" refers to both "covering" and "veil" as Allah سبحانه وتعالى Himself uses it in the Qur'an, which meaning can be translated as:

"It is not given to any human being that Allah should speak to him unless (it be) by

Revelation, or from behind a veil.” (42:51).

Hence, Allah ﷾ clearly mentions the word *Hijab* to mean “covering”. He makes it very clear to us that no one has spoken to Him directly face to face, but there was always a *Hijab* (covering or veil) between Him and the one who spoke to Him. In fact, even the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ Allah’s Messenger to the entire mankind did not see Allah ﷾. Allah ﷾ honored the Prophet ﷺ by making him ascend to the highest Heaven, and by giving him the privilege of speaking to Him. However, one of the Prphet’s Companions asked him if he had seen Allah ﷾, and the Prophet ﷺ is reported to have answered him as in the following Hadith, whose meaning can be translated as:

AbU Tharr رضي الله عنه narrated that he asked Allah’s Messenger ﷺ: “Did you see your

Rubb (Sustainer)?" He ﷺ replied: "I saw light." (Reported by Muslim).

Also Aishah رضي الله عنها said:

"If anyone tells you that Muhammad ﷺ has seen his Rubb (Sustainer), he is a liar for Allah says,(which can be translated as):*'No vision can grasp Him' (6:103)."* (Reported by Al-Bukhari).

Another verse, in Surah Al-Mutaffifin, verse 15, Allah سبحانه وتعالى uses the word *Hijab* when He says, which meaning can be translated as:

"*Nay! Surely they (evil-doers) will be veiled from seeing their Rubb(Lord) that Day."*

In the above verse, Allah سبحانه وتعالى explains how the *Kafiroon* (disbelievers) will be veiled (covered) from seeing Allah. Note that the word used here by Allah is "*Mahjoboon"* which comes from the verb "*Hajaba"* which means "prevent from seeing".

In another verse, Allah ﷻ says, which meaning can be translated as:

"And when you (Muhammad) recite the Qur'an, We put between you and those who believe not in the Hereafter, an invisible Hijab (veil or covering)." (17:45)

The word *Hijab* in this verse means 'O Muhammad you will not be seen by the *Kafiroon* (disbelievers) when you recite the Qur'an. Note that the the above verse (17:45) was revealed as the result of the following incident in the life of the Prophet ﷺ:

Narrated Sa'ead ibn Jubair رضي الله عنه "When Chapter 111 was revealed, the wife of Abu Lahab came looking for the Prophet ﷺ while he was sitting with Abu Baker رضي الله عنه. Abu Baker رضي الله عنه said to the Prophet ﷺ. "I prefer you hide from her or leave as she is coming for you and she might harm you." The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

'There will be a screen set between her and I." So, she did not see him..." (Reported by Abu Ya'ala).

In brief, as stated in the Qur'an, the word *Hijab* means to veil or cover something from being seen by others, so when we say that the Muslim woman must wear *Hijab*, we mean that she must cover her face so as not to be seen by men who are not her *maharim* (her husband and those whom she is forbidden to marry permanently). It does not mean, the way some Muslims understand, that *Hijab* means covering the hair only because if it does, then when Allah stated in the Qur'an in Chapter 42, verse 51 that no one will be spoken to by Allah except from behind *Hijab*, it would mean that they will see His Face, which is absolutely incorrect.

Indeed, in this world no one has seen Allah ﷻ. Even the Prophet Moses and the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ whom Allah ﷻ has given the

privilege to speak to Him did not see the Almighty. However, in the Hereafter, Allah ﷻ will reward the Muslim Believers by allowing them to look at Him, which is then the supreme success and Allah will be pleased with them and they will be pleased with Him as He says in the Qu'ran, which meaning can be translated as:

"For those who have done good is the best (reward, i.e. Paradise) and even more (i.e. having the honor of glancing at the countenance of Allah)." (10:26).

In line with the above Qur'anic Verse are *Ahadith* that tell us that Allah ﷻ will grant the righteous Believers the highest honor and privilege to see His Face. This means He will unveil His Face (remove the *Hijab* or covering). One of these *Ahadith* is the following:

‘Abdullah ibn Umar narrated that Allah’s Messenger ﷺ is reported to have said, which meaning can be translated as:

"The lowest in station among the inhabitants of Paradise will be he who looks at his gardens, his wives, his bliss, his servants, and his couches stretching a thousand years’ journey, and the one who will be most honored by Allah will be he who looks at His face morning and evening.” He then recited, "Faces on that day will be bright, looking at their Rubb (Sustainer).” (Reported by At-Tirmithi).

Proofs of the Obligation of Hijab

For the benefit of all Muslims, let us find in the Qur'an and the authentic Sunnah the concrete proofs of the obligation of wearing *Hijab* by Muslim women. But let us first try to comprehend what the Qur'an says about the required *Hijab* for women. And now let the words of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ guide us as to how women in Islam must be covered. In this way, we get divine guidance that will unite our different positions on the issue of *Hijab.*

Proofs from the Qur'an

First Proof: Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'an, which meaning can be translated as:

'And tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things) and protect their private parts (from illegal sexaul acts) and not to show off their adornment

except only that which is apparent (like both eyes for necessity to see the way, or outer palms of hands or one eye or dress like veil, gloves, head-cover, apron, etc.) and to draw their veils all over Juyubihinna (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks, and bosoms, etc) and not to reveal their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husband's fathers, or their sons, or their husband's sons, or their brothers, or their brother's sons, or their sister's sons, their (Muslim) women (i.e. their sisters in Islam) or the (female) slaves whom their right hands posses, or old male servants who lack vigour, or small children who have no sense of feminine sex. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And all of you beg Allah to forgive you all, O believers that you may be successful' (24:31).

In the above verse, there are three proofs of the obligation of *Hijab* (covering the woman's face):

A)*"And not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent."* Here Allah forbids women to show off their adornment absolutely except that which is apparent, such as their outer clothes, this is the interprtation of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud of this verse. Also, examining this verse, we see that Allah says:*"Except only that which is apparent"* and He does not say: "Except only that which they expose", because what is exposed is something you cannot hide but what is apparent is under your control, you can hide it if you wish to do so and you can show it off if you wish to do so; therefore, women can only show off their outer clothes because they cannot hide them even if they wish.

B)*"And to draw their veils all over Juyubihinna (i.e. their body, face, necks and bosoms)."* A woman's veil is what she puts over her head, so if she is ordered to draw her veil all over her body starting from the head ending at the toes, then her face will be the first part of her body to be covered. Also, it is common sense that a great part of a woman's beauty lies in her face, so how would Allah ﷻ command the woman to draw her veil over her body to prevent others from looking at her curves while permitting her to expose her face? This does not make sense, does it?

C) "*And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment."* During the pre-Islamic period, women used to wear anklets and they would stamp their feet on the ground to produce a rattle in order to attract the attention of men, so Allah ﷻ made it forbidden for Muslim women to walk in such a manner . If women are forbidden to stamp their feet on the ground to avoid

having men infatuated, then how about exposing their face? So which is more attractive to men, hearing the sound of the rattling anklets or seeing a woman's face? Obviously, a woman's face is more attractive. Given this reality, how could it be possible to permit women to expose their faces while forbidding them to stamp their feet? This is a very clear proof that a woman's face must be covered whenever strange men or *non-maharim* are present.

Second Proof: Allah says in the Qur'an, which meaning can be translated as:

"O prophet! Tell your wives, and your daughters, and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (veils) all over their bodies (i.e. screen themselves completely except the eyes or one eye to see the way). That will be better that they should be known (as free respectable women) so as not to be annoyed. And Allah is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most

Merciful."'(33:59). The purpose of the revelation of this verse is that the women at the Prophet's time used to walk to outskirts of Al-Madinah when they had to answer the call of nature because they did not have bathrooms or toilets in their homes; and there were those wrong-doers who used to follow the slave girls (bondmaids) when they walked outside the town to answer the call of nature and harass them. There were cases, however, when they would harass the free women thinking they were slaves, so Allah ﷻ revealed this verse to command the Prophet's wives, daughters, and the believing women to cover themselves in order to be distinguished from the slave girls. Regarding this verse, Ibn Kathir holds that: "Allah ﷻ commanded His Messenger ﷺ to order the believing women, especially his wives and daughters, (for their honour) to draw cloaks on themselves to be distinguished from the non-Muslim women and slave girls." The word "*Jilbab*" (cloak)

means the cover over the veil (*yashmak*), according to the following interpreters of Qur'an: Ibn Mas'ud, Obaidah, Qatadah, Al-Hasan Al-Basri, Sa'eed ibn Jubair, Ibrahim Anna'kahy, and Atta Al-Kharasani.

Narrated Ali ibn Abi Talhah, that ibn Abbas is reported to have said: "Allah ﷻ has commanded the believing women to cover their faces when they leave their houses for a necessity". Mohammad ibn Seareen (a great Muslim scholar) said, "I asked Obaidah As-Salmani about the meaning of Allah's saying "*Draw their cloaks all over their bodies*", so he covered his face and head while exposing his left eye. Also, many Muslim scholars such as Abu Bakr Ar-Razi (died 370 AH), Emmad Ad-Deen At-Tabari (died 516 AH) Imam Al-Baqawi (died 516 AH), Ibn Al-Jawzi (died 597 AH) in his Tafseer (explanation) of the Qur'an, Sheikh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (died 728 AH) and many others confirmed that this verse implies an

obvious command that a woman must cover her face when *non-maharim* men are around. In the presence of all these proofs, we can see that this verse undoubtedly means that a Muslim woman must wear a *Hijab* that will cover her body from head to toes.

Third Proof: Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'an, which meaning can be translated as:

"And when you ask them (the Prophet's wives) for anything you want, ask them from behind a screen. That is pure for your hearts and for their hearts." (33:53) This verse, which was revealed in the fifth year after *Hijrah* (emigration to Madinah), tells us that *Hijab* means covering all parts of the body including the face and there is no dispute between Muslim scholars that this verse means covering the face as well as the rest of the body. But the dispute is about one issue whether this verse is restricted only to the wives of the Prophet ﷺ? Or is it for all

Muslim women? Imam At-Tabri, the greatest scholar of Tafseer, stated in his 'Book of Tafseer' that "*When you ask the Prophet's wives and the believing women who are not your wives, ask them from behind a Hijab (veil) and do not enter their homes (while they are inside the house alone), this is purer for your hearts and their hearts*" is a an obligatory ruling, which is not for the Prophet's wives only but for all Muslim women. This verse (33:53) and verse (33:59) have one thing in common: in verse 33:53 Allah ﷻ says, which meaning can be translated as:

"*And when you ask (his wives) for anything you want, ask them from behind a screen*", which means that the Prophet's wives must cover their bodies including the face; and in verse 33:59 Allah ﷻ says, which can be translated as: "*O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the*

believers to draw their cloaks (veils) all over their bodies",

thus commanding the Prophet ﷺ to ask his wives, daughters, and the believing women to cover themselves. The point here is: how could we say that in verse 33:53 the implication is that the Prophet's wives must cover their faces and in verse 33:59 the implication is that they have to cover their bodies, but faces and hands are excluded? If we say this, then we mean that the Qur'an states one thing in one verse and means another in a different context when both verses concern the same ruling. Each single verse is an integral part of, and complementary to the entire body of the Qur'an.

<u>Fourth Proof</u>: Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'an, which meaning can be translated as: *"And as for women past child bearing who do not expect wed-lock, it is no sin on them if they*

discard their (outer) clothing in such a way as not to show their adornment. But to refrain (i.e not to discard their outer clothing) is better for them. And Allah is All Hearer, All Knower." (24:60). The point here is that Allah ﷻ has removed the sin on elderly women (those who had past childbearing age and have no attraction to men) if they discard their outer clothes provided that they do not show their adornment. It is obvious that the meaning of this verse is to discard the outer clothing but not all the clothing because they will be nude. So elderly women can expose their faces and hands (in the presence of men who are *non-maharim*) if they wish, but if they do not, it is better for them. In his explanation of the above-mentioned verse, Imam At-Tabri holds that it means there is no sin on them if they discard their veils and their gowns (*abayas*). Also, Imam Abu Ya'ala said: "In this verse there is a proof that it is permissible for elderly women to expose

their faces and hands in the presence of men but not their hair because it is forbidden for them as it is forbidden for young women." Sheikh Abdulaziz ibn Baz adds: "Allah says that elderly women who are past the age of marriage are not to be counted for misdemeanor for removing their clothes (coverings or veils) off their faces and hands as long as they are not exposing their adornments". So it is clear that elderly women who are allowed to expose their faces and hands must still observe bashfulness and modesty by not exposing their adornments. It must be noted that Allah ﷻ has encouraged them to observe *Hijab* (full covering of their bodies which includes covering the face) when He ﷻ says, which meaningca n be translated as:

"*But to refrain (not to discard their outer clothing) is better for them."*. If Allah ﷻ has encouraged elderly women (who by nature do not appear attractive to men) not to remove

their veils (covering) from their faces, so how about young and pretty women?

Proofs from the Authentic Sunnah

<u>First Proof</u>: Aishah ﷺ said: *"May Allah bestow His Mercy on the early emigrant women when Allah ﷻ revealed,* which meaning can be translated as:

"and to draw their veils all over Juyubihinna (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms)' (24:31) — they tore their Muruts (a woolen dress, or a waist -binding cloth or an apron, etc.) and covered their faces with those torn Muruts." (Reported by Al-Bukhari). Safiyya bint Shaiba ﷺ narrated that *"Aishah ﷺ used to say: "When the verse: `They should cover (draw their veils over) their bodies, faces, necks, and bosoms (24:31)' was*

revealed, (the ladies) cut their waist sheets at the edges and covered their heads and faces with those cut pieces of cloth." (Reported by Al-Bukhari and Abu-Dawud).

The above cited authentic *Ahadith* actually tell us how Muslim women at the time of the Prophet ﷺ obeyed Allah ﷻ and subsequently implemented the obligation of *Hijab*. If this verse has a different meaning to it, then the Prophet ﷺ or at least Aishah رضي الله عنها (who is one of the Mothers of Believers) would have informed or corrected them regarding the real interpretation of *Hijab*.

Second Proof: The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, which meaningcan be translated as: *"The woman is awrah (one who is forbidden to be exposed)."* (Reported by At-Tirmithi who said that it is an authentic Hadith). Sheikh Hamoud At-Tiwijri said "This Hadith proves that a woman's body is all '*awrah*' (not to be seen by or exposed to

men who are *non- maharim*). It was also reported that Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal said: "A woman's nails are *'awrah'* and when she leaves her home, she must not expose any part of her body, not even her shoes, because the shoes can reveal the shape of the feet, and I also prefer that she buttons her sleeves so that no part of her body should be seen by others." Sheikh Al-Islam Ibn Taimiyyah reported that Imam Ahmed said: "Every part of a woman's body is *awrah*, even her finger nails." Sheikh Al-Islam also said: "This is also the interpretation of Imam Malik."

Third Proof: Narrated Ibn Umar ﷺ: Allah's Messenger ﷺ is reported to have said, which meaning can be translated as: "*A woman who is in a state of Ihram (ritual purity during Hajj or Umrah) must not wear a niqab (covering the face except the eyes) or gloves.*" (Reported by Al-Bukhari, Malik, At-Tirmithi, Abu-Dawud, and Ahmed). Abu Baker ibn Al-Arabi said: " In the *Hadith* of

Ibn Umar, when the Prophet ﷺ said '*the woman must not wear niqab*' that is because covering the woman's face is obligatory on every woman who is not elderly except in *Hajj* (and when praying where no man who is not her *mahram* sees her)".

Fourth Proof: Aishah ﷺ said: *"Men on camels used to pass by us while we were with the Prophet ﷺ and we were in a state of ihram. We would cover our faces with our gowns when they passed by us, and then uncover them again."* (Reported by Abu-Dawud and Ibn Majah) Atta, Malik, Ath-Thawri, Ash-Shafi'i, Ahmad, and Is-haq hold that it is permissible for women to cover their faces while in a state of *ihram*. (Fiqh As Sunnah 5:49).

From the two Hadiths mentioned above, it is obvious that during *Hajj* a woman should draw part of her '*khimar*' (piece of clothes) over her head and face so as to avoid being

seen by men who are *non-maharim*. Also, Sheikh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said: "This is a proof that *niqab* and gloves were known to women who were not in a state of *Ihram*, which requires covering their faces and hands". And he also said: "There are two opinions in the school of Islamic Law of Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal regarding a woman's face while she is in a state of *Ihram*: the first opinion holds the face in analogy with a man's head while in a state of *Ihram* (it must not be covered). The second one proposes that a woman's face is like a man's body while in a state of *Ihram*; it must be covered with seamless sheets. The latter is obviously the correct one because the Prophet ﷺ taught us that '*niqab*' and gloves are forbidden and that women must wear something that covers the face and hands while in a state of *Ihram*. However, woman's clothes must not reveal the curves of the body. Ibn Al-Qayyim said: "When the

Prophet ﷺ made it forbidden for women to wear '*niqab*" and gloves in the Hadith narrated by Ibn Umar, it is a proof that a woman's face has the same ruling as a man's body, and not as a man's head. Therefore, it is forbidden for women to wear anything that is made to fit the face such as '*niqab*' whereas it is not forbidden for her to cover her face with a '*Jilbab*' (veil) or the like. Nothing is reported of the Prophet ﷺ regarding the obligation of exposing a woman's face during *Ihram*. He also said: "How can it be forbidden for a woman to cover her face when she is commanded by Allah that she must draw her '*Jilbab*' (veil), so as not to be recognized?" Ibn Hajar reported in 'Fat-h Al-Bari' that Ibn Al-Munthir said: "They (Muslim scholars) agreed that a woman during *Ihram* can wear sewn (stitched) clothes and shoes, and she can cover her head and her hair, but not her face, which can be covered by drawing a

piece of cloth over it to hide it from *non-maharim."*

<u>Fifth Proof</u>: Narrated Ibn Umar ﷺ that Allah's Messenger ﷺ is reported to have said, which meaningcan be translated as: *"On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will not look at the one who trails his loincloth out of arrogance' Umm Salamah ﷺ asked: what should women do with the hem of their clothes? He ﷺ said: "They may lower them a hand's span." she said: "But their feet would still remain exposed." He ﷺ said "Let them lower those equal to an arm's length but not more than that."* (Reported by Abu-Dawud, AtTirmithi, An -Nasa'i, Imam Ahmed; At-Tirmithi said that this Hadith is authentic). Imam At-Tirmithi said: "In this Hadith, there is a permission for women to trail their clothes so that their feet would be covered." And Imam Al-Baihaqi said: "This Hadith is a proof of the obligation of covering the feet." Sheikh Muhammad ibn Saleh ibn Uthaimeen

said "In this Hadith, there is a proof that women are obligated to cover their feet; and this ruling was known to the wives of the rightly-guided companions. And it needs no special emphasis that the feet are less attractive than the face or trhe hands. Is it possible that Islam enforces a ruling for covering what is believed to be less attractive, such as the feet, but permits exposing what is supposed to be more attractive, such as the face? Aishah ﵂ is reported to have said, which meaning can be translated as:

"During Hajj, the camel riders used to pass past us while we were in a state of Ihram, and in the company of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and when they were parallel to us, each one of us (the women in the group) would lower down her Jilbab (veil) over her face, and would lift it up again when the riders had gone." (Reported by Ahmed, Abu-Dawud, and Ibn Majah). Regarding this Hadith, Sheikh Muhammad ibn Saleh ibn Uthaimeen

said: "The saying of Aishah ﵂ "*and would lift it up again when the riders had gone"* is a proof of the obligation of covering the face". Also, when she said "*each one of us*", she obviously meant any of the women in the group, and not only the Prophet's wives. Given all these proofs from the Qur'an and the authentic Sunnah, we can conclude that Muslim women are indeed obligated to cover their faces and hands. This is because Islam enjoins men and women to preserve their chastity for the sake of eternal success. Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'an, which meaning can be translated as:

"Successful indeed are the Believers. Those who offer their Salat (prayers) with all solemnity and full submissiveness. And those who turn away from Al-laghw (dirty, false, evil vain talk, falsehood, and all that Allah has forbidden). And those who pay the Zakat. And those who guard their chastity (i.e. private parts) from

illegal sexual acts. Except from their wives or (the slaves) that their right hands possess, - for then, they are free from blame; But whoever seeks beyond that, then those are the transgressors; Those who are faithfully true to their Amanat (all the duties which Allah has ordained, honesty, moral responsibility and trust) and to their covenants; And those who strictly guard their (five compulsory congregational) Salawat (prayers) (at their fixed stated hours). These are indeed the inheritors Who shall inherit the Firdaus (Paradise). They shall dwell therein forever." (23:1-11).

Arguments by those Who Legalize Exposing a Muslim Woman's Face

Some Muslims have a dissenting opinion regarding the obligation of *Hijab* and they claim that they have textual evidence from the Qur'an and the Sunnah that can be taken for a proof of the legitimacy of exposing a woman's face. Let us examine very closely those "proofs" as to their relevance and authenticity to make the issue of *Hijab* very clear to all Muslims, especially those who are searching for the truth:

First Argument: Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'an, which meaning can be translated as:

"And not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent." (24:31). They (who legalize exposing a Muslim woman's face) hold that this verse implies a permission

for women to expose what is apparent from them, that is the face and the hands, thus following the explanation offered by Abdullah ibn Abbas who said: "*Except only that which is apparent"* refers to the face and hands." The answer to this is as follows: They extract this saying of Ibn Abbas from what has been reported by Ibn Jareer At-Tabri who said: "Ibn Abbas said that "*And not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent*" means Kohl ('eyeliner' in modern terms) and rings." This report of At-Tabri has one person in the chain of transmitters who is weak (his narration is not absloutely reliable); his name is Muslim ibn Kisan Addabi Al-Kufy. Ibn Hajar said: "Muslim is a weak narrator." Also, Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal said: "His (Muslim's) Hadith should not be written down." Imam Al-Bukhari commented on the same Hadith saying: "They (the scholars of Hadith) referred to Muslim's narration as being

weak." So with this narrator (Muslim) being in the chain of transmitters of the saying reported by Ibn Abbas, we see that this evidence is also weak and therefore cannot be taken for a sound proof. There is another narration of this saying of Ibn Abbas that was reported by Imam Al-Baihaqi, who said in his book 'Assunan Al-Kobra': "Ibn Abbas explained that "*And not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent*" refers to 'what is in the face and hands'. Similarly, there are two weak transmitters among the narrators of the Hadith. The first is Ahmed ibn Abduljabbar ibn Muhammad Al-Utaradi, who was described by Ibn Hajar as being 'weak'. And Imam Ath-thahabi said that more than one scholar agreed that the narration is weak. Besides, Ahmed's own son, Abdurahman, said: "I used to write down what my father dictated to me, but I stopped doing so when people started referring to him as being

weak." The second is Abdullah ibn Muslim ibn Harmooz Al-Makki, who was also described by Ibn Hajar as being 'weak'. Imam Ath-thahabi reported that "Ibn Ma'ain said that Abdullah ibn Muslim is weak; and Ibn Al-Madini repeated the word twice. So none of what has been reported on behalf of Ibn Abass regarding the *hijab* verse is authentic. On the other hand, it has been reported that Abdullah ibn Mas'ud said that "*And not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent*" refers to 'the clothes', which is an authentic narration as confirmed by Ibn Jareer, Ibn Shaibah and Al-Hakim. And authenticity here is based on the conditions set by Muslim; and Imam Ath-thahabi agreed with him. Sheikh Muhammad ibn Saleh ibn Uthaimeen commented on the entire situation saying: "We could have accepted what Ibn Abass reported had not we had a different opinion of another Companion

that bears more weight to it, the opinion held by Ibn Mas'ud.

Second Argument: Abu-Dawud said: "Yaqoub ibn Ka'b Al-Antaki and Mu'amal ibn Al-Fadil Al-Harrany informed me that Alwalead told them that he quoted Sa'eed ibn Basheer, who quoted Qatadah, who quoted Khalid ibn Duraik who stated that Aisha ﷻ is reported to have said: *"Asmaa' bint Abi Bakr ﷻ walked in front of the Prophet ﷺ wearing thin clothes, then He ﷺ turned his face away from her and said: 'O Asmaa! When a girl reaches the age of puberty it is not permissible for her to reveal any part of her body except this and this (pointing to his face and hands)."*(Reported by Abu-Dawud). They (who legalize exposing a Muslim woman's face) keep citing this Hadith as a clear proof of their claim. Many Muslim women, including the pious among them, believe in that Hadith without knowing that it is weak in two respects. First, there is a

disconnection in the chain of transmitters (one of the narrators had never met the one whom he claimed he quoted). In the chain of the narrators of this Hadith, Abu-Dawud, the compiler of the set, said: "Khalid ibn Duraik did not hear from Aishah ". Second, in the chain of the narrators, there is Sa'eed ibn Basheer who was described as being 'weak' by Ibn Hajar, Ibn Ma'ain, An-Nassai, Ali ibn Al-Madini and Ibn Hiban. Therefore, those who claim that this Hadith is a proof that a Muslim woman can expose her face and hands to non-mahram must disregard this piece of unreliable evidence.

Third Argument: Narrated Jabir ibn Abdullah : "*I attended the prayer with Allah's Messenger on Eid-el-Fitr Day. He started off with the prayer before Khutba (sermon) without Athan or Iqamah. He then stood up leaning on Bilal and commanded the worshippers to be pious to Allah. He encouraged them to show*

obedience to Him. Then He ﷺ proceeded to the women. He ﷺ preached to them and reminded them of the importance of giving alms. And told them that a great many women will be the fuels of Hell. A woman with a birthmark on her cheek stood up and inquired: "Why is it so, Messenger of Allah?" He ﷺ said: "For you often grumble and show ingratitude to your husbands. The women began to give away their jewellery for alms." (Reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim). Those who legalize exposing a Muslim woman's face claim that when Jabir ﷺ said: "*A woman with a birthmark on her cheek*", he must have seen her face. There are two possibe answers to this point. First, there is no proof in the Hadith that indicates that the Prophet ﷺ saw the woman without *Hijab*, but it was only Jabir who saw her face, perhaps because her *Hijab* might have fallen off her face, or because she was in the middle of the women, and so she took off her *Hijab.*

another possibility is that she might have been an old woman who is permitted to expose her face as stated in the Qur'an, which meaningcan be translated as : *"And as for women past childbearing who do not expect wed-lock, it is no sin on them if they discard their (outer) clothing in such away as not to show their adornment. But to refrain (i.e. not to discard their outer clothing) is better for them. And Allah is All-Hearer, All-Knower"* (24:60). Besides, it must be noted that this story was reported by many companions other than Jabir, and neither one of them mentioned that part about the woman's birthmark. Also, Imam Muslim reported that those who narrated this story besides Jabir are Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudri ﷺ, Abdullah ibn Abass ﷺ, and Abdullah ibn Umar ﷺ, and that none of them reported that he saw the woman's face. Moreover, the same story was narrated by Abu-Hurairah ﷺ and Abdullah ibn Mas'ud ﷺ without mentioning anything

about the woman's face. So here we have five companions who reported the same story, but none of them mentioned a woman exposing her face. It is obvious then that only Jabir ﷺ saw the woman's face. Whether or not did Jabir ﷺ see the woman's face does not make a profound argument for those who legalize exposing a woman's face, because it was not proven that the Prophet ﷺ saw the woman exposing her face and he approved of it. And if indeed Jabir ﷺ saw her face, it must be noted that he only mentioned one woman, not the majority of them. This means that women at that time (with the exception of the woman that Jabir ﷺ saw) wore *Hijab*.

<u>Fourth Argument</u>: Narrated Sahl ibn Sa'd ﷺ: *"A lady came to Allah's Messenger ﷺ and said: "O Allah's Messenger! I have come to offer myself to you in marriage). He ﷺ raised his eyes and looked at her and then lowered his head. When the lady saw that he did not make any gesture or put any facial expression*

indicating acceptance, she sat down…etc." (Reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim). Those who legalize exposing a Muslim woman's face say that the Prophet ﷺ looked at the woman, but he ﷺ did not show any interest in marrying her; and if her face had not been exposed, he ﷺ would not have looked at her. There are three logical and sound answers to this allegation: First, there is nothing in this Hadith that states that the woman was exposing her face, and for the Prophet ﷺ to look up and down at the woman does not necessary mean she was exposing her face and that he ﷺ was looking at it. Second, this story could have occurred before the obligation of *Hijab*. Third, it is legal for a man, when he proposes to a woman, to look at her face. So if this woman did expose her face in front of the Prophet ﷺ, it could be for that reason that she exposed her face to the Prophet ﷺ hoping that he would marry her.

Fifth Argument: Narrated Abdullah ibn Abbas ﵄: '*Al-Fadl ibn Abbas ﵄ rode behind Allah's Messenger ﷺ as his companion rider on the back of his camel on the Day of Nahr (slaughtering of sacrifice, 10th day of the month of Thul-Hijjah) and Al-Fadl was a handsome man. The Prophet ﷺ stopped to give the people verdicts (answers to their question regarding Hajj). In the meantime, a beautiful woman from the tribe of Khath'am came to ask the Prophet ﷺ a question. Al-Fadl stared at her as her beauty attracted him. The Prophet ﷺ looked behind while Al-Fadl was staring at her. The Prophet ﷺ held his hands backwards and caught the chin of Al-Fadl and turned his face (to the other direction). She said: "O Allah's Messenger! The obligation of performing Hajj enjoined by Allah on His worshippers has become due (compulsory) on my father who is an old man and who cannot sit firmly on a beast of burden. Will it be convenient if I perform*

Hajj on his behalf?" He ﷺ said "Yes". (Reported by Al-Bukhari). Those who legalize exposing a Muslim woman's face hold that the woman in this Hadith was exposing her face in the presence of the Prophet ﷺ and he did not command her to cover it. There are three likely answers to this argument: First, there is no proof in the Hadith that states it is legal for a man to look at a woman's face (one who is non-mahram) because the Prophet ﷺ did not approve of what Al-Fadl ؓ did. Instead, he ﷺ turned Al-Fadl's face to the other direction, so that he would not be able to look at her. Imam An-Nawawi said: "One thing to be concluded from this Hadith is that it is forbidden for men to look at women who are *non-mahram*". If someone would ask why the Prophet ﷺ did not command the woman to cover her face, the answer is, he ﷺ might have ordered the woman to cover her face but the narrator of the Hadith did not report it.

Not reporting something does not necessarily mean it did not happen. Second, this Hadith was narrated by Abdullah ibn Abbas ﷺ who was not present with the Prophet ﷺ when this story occurred, because Abdullah ibn Abbas ﷺ left for Muzdalifah (a place within the vicinity of Makkah) at night, but the Prophet ﷺ left in the morning as reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim and he was informed of this story by his brother Al-Fadl ﷺ. However, his brother never told him that the woman was exposing her face. Also, when he said she was beautiful, he did not mean he saw her face, but he could have seen the curves of her body or part of her skin. The whole matter could have happened by accident; her veil might have fallen down from her face since women in a state of *Ihram* are forbidden to wear *niqab.* However, we must remember that women, as reported in the Hadith narrated by Aishah ﷺ, must cover their faces with their gowns whenever men who are *non-*

mahram pass by them. It can be inferred, then, that Muslim women who follow Allah's commandment of *Hijab* must always find ways to cover their faces whenever *non-mahram* men are around. Having no *niqab* as is the case while in a state of *Ihram* is not an excuse to display their faces. Third, this Hadith was also narrated by Ali ibn Abi Talib ﷺ and Jabir ibn Abdullah ﷺ and was compiled by Imam Muslim, but none of them mentioned anything about the beauty of the woman or that she was exposing her face.

Conclusion

Obviously, Islam (as the true religion) gives concrete and profound answers to all problems and issues that bother mankind. One very good example of this is the issue of *Hijab*. From the number of Qur'anic *Ayaat* and authentic *Ahadith* cited in this work, we

can conclude that *Hijab* is indeed a religious duty that Allah ﷻ has enjoined to the believing women for their own protection and success. It is a manifestation of woman's adherence to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. It indicates her obedience to Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ. It is a sign of her strength that would safeguard her dignity and honor against the wickedness of some men; and accordingly, it is a protection of the society where she belongs. Above all, it shows her preference for the Hereafter where she will be among those who will be given the honor to see Allah's Face.

Brothers and sisters in Islam, now you have found the truth about *Hijab*; and it is for you to decide which path to take. For your guidance, however, always remember this Hadith when you are in doubt of any issue that concerns your faith: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said, which meaning can be translated as: *"What is*

lawful is clear and what is unlawful is clear, but between them are certain doubtful things which many people do not know. So he who guards against doubtful things keeps his religion and his honor blameless but he who falls into doubtful things falls into that which is unlawful". (Reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim). Allah ﷻ knows best and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah, his progeny, companions and whoever follows his path till the Day of Ressurection.

END

For any comments or corrections please contact me at:

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The Hijab Of Muslim Woman

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Hijab